

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-26. (Canceled)

27. (New) A method for manufacturing a phase shift mask blank, comprising:  
selecting a target having a predetermined hardness as the rate of generating defects becomes below a desired value, based on a correlation that a rate of generating defects in a light semi-transmitting film containing a metal, silicone, and at least one of oxygen and nitrogen becomes lower, as a hardness of a target containing a metal and silicone becomes higher, and

performing sputtering using the target in an atmosphere containing at least one of oxygen and nitrogen, to form the light semi-transmitting film on a transparent substrate.

28. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the rate of generating defects is calculated based on a size of a defect.

29. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the rate of generating defects is calculated based on a size of a defect divided into a plurality of grades.

30. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the hardness of the target is 900 HV or more in Vickers' hardness.

31. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the hardness of the target is 980 HV or more in Vickers' hardness.

32. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the hardness of the target is 1100 HV or more in Vickers' hardness.

33. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the target contains 70 mol% to 95 mol% of silicon.

34. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the target contains more than 80 mol% to 95 mol% of silicon.

35. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the target contains one or more of metals selected from the group consisting of molybdenum, titanium, tantalum, tungsten, and chrome.

36. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the method further comprises sintering metal silicide powders and silicon powders to form the target.

37. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 36, wherein the sintering step is performed at a heating temperature of 1300°C or less.

38. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the method further comprises cleaning the light semi-transmitting film after the light semi-transmitting film is formed.

39. (New) The method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27, wherein the light semi-transmitting film has a transmittance of 9% to 20% for an exposure wavelength.

40. (New) A method for manufacturing a transfer mask by patterning the light semi-transmitting film of a mask blank manufactured by the method for manufacturing the phase shift mask blank according to claim 27.